

«Can't Go To Hell (If I'm Already There)»

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«Can't Go To Hell (If I'm Already There)»

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Summary

Loneliness was sure to tick a person off eventually.

— where Doflamingo is faced with visions of ghosts; one of them is flesh and bone.
Giveaway fic for the Bird Of Paradise, Doflamingo fanzine! Congrats @anamara32523761 on Twitter!

Loneliness was sure to tick a person off eventually. Donquixote Doflamingo fought it either by relishing in the one-way conversation he held with the Impel Down officers who brought him lunch and the morning paper, or just throwing words up at the ceiling and answering the reverb. Thinking aloud, laughing, singing and recanting nursery rhymes became his repertoire.

However, eventually, loneliness started taking shapes.

He first saw small pink-hued shadows, tinted by his glasses. Tiny. Barely there. Easy enough to ignore if he were to close his eyes, look the other way, chew his stale bread and read the morning paper once more. Straw Hat was at it again, and Kaido had been taken down, along with Big Mom. Law, his sweet, precious Law, had been there too, causing the wreckage he had always been meant for. He noticed how the ink was skimmed through in some parts of the text and he wondered if

Morgan, the crazed bird, was running low on funds to cover the damn paper or if the events were happening too fast for the printer to keep up to. When there was no more bread to chew, Doflamingo chewed on his tongue and was left to reminisce about the one time, the several months of his youth, he had been in a similar position.

Rummaging the garbage for whatever was edible, and what wasn't. Moulding, crushed leftovers, the rotting skins of peeled apples and pears. He'd throw half of what he gathered into the shaky arms of his little brother before they were chased by burning arrows and pitchforks. At the shelter house by a cliff, he'd be left biting on his tongue with the faded fantasy of feasting on one of those incredible medium raw steaks he had taken for granted at a younger age. Biting a little too hard to make his tongue bleed, he could pretend the taste of iron was like the rich bleed of the meat.

The shadows—tricks of light—he had spotted earlier in the corners of his vision were shaped like those little kids, mouths stuffed with filth, running from sharp farming utensils and flying arrows and fire.

One of these days—or nights, who even knew anymore—one of the shadows tapped on the sea-stone bars of his cell to get his attention.

Doflamingo picked up the newspaper again to ignore them. Straw Hat was at it, Law had been there too when the pirate alliance took down two Emperors. Incredible still. The tides were turning, the world dynamics shifting, and secrets unfurling. In the end, whoever was left standing would define the meaning of Justice, survival of the fittest, and the fittest was sitting alone in a prison cell with the ghosts of two little children staring right back at him as if he were the crazy one for not responding.



The newspaper in his sea-stone-bound hands didn't change its narrative, no matter how many times he turned the pages. If anything, they just became stained with red. Blood that spattered from the ghost of Donquixote Homing, unintelligible gurgling sounds and rolling eyes accompanying an otherwise silent reading. If his mind was trying to make Donquixote Doflamingo feel bad for his first murder, then it wasn't doing a great job. If anything, it was a reminder of the sheer power he had held in his tiny hand for the first time, as a ten-year-old, to be rid of the pests which had wronged him thus far.

Homing, poor excuse of a father, of a *man*, had deserved it. Given the chance, he would do it again.

What Doflamingo was having a harder time blocking out, however, were child Rosinante's screams. They scratched the ghost's throat until hoarse but even then he hadn't stopped. It wasn't like when his silly little brother stubbed his toe or knocked his head against a rail—no, no, this was much worse and so much more annoying, making the veins on Doflamingo's forehead bulge.

“Shut it, *Corazón*,” he spat without thinking, the effect immediate as silence befell the entire cell. The words he read in the newspaper were no different than last time—Straw Hat, Law, Kidd, and Kaido's empire crumbling, Big Mom defeated as well. Was it the same issue? How long had it been? Long enough for the child to quiet down and grow into a full-fledged adult. Not another word spoken since, only hastily written words on a notebook and black plumes of a matching jacket Doflamingo already missed.

It was odd, how a single piece of clothing, after years of usage, still complemented one's very being.

To be reminded of soft black feathers was a stab in the back. Because it reminded him of trust. Of family. Of being lied to.

The ghost his mind conjured showed him blood. Soaking fabric, staining snow. Smeared makeup and teary eyes with a gun pointing at Doflamingo's forehead, *Marine Code 01746*.

Rosinante would never have pulled that trigger; Doflamingo knew as much because that was the difference between the two of them. But he did lament his brother's death, mourned it, and wished he had held back his finger at the time. Killing yet another family member at the hands of his temper hadn't been in his plans, after all, there were so many more useful ways to atone for betrayal.

In the end, Donquixote Doflamingo *saved* Rosinante from a fate much worse than death.

“Sometimes he just... speaks. So don't mind that, Commander. And be careful. He's unpredictable.”

Had Doflamingo bothered, he would've recognised that voice as Hannyabal, the current Warden of Impel Down. He chewed on his tongue thinking the blood might taste of beef instead of rotting breath and remnants of stale bread stuck to his molars, and re-read the contents of the World Economy Newspaper—uh, that despicable monkey in flip-flops and a straw hat, his dear, sweet, would-be *Corazón*, Law, and some brat named Eustass, teaming up to take down Kaido, of all people? And Big Mom too!—and the ghost kneeled before him with a near-mute thud.

This ghost... there was something different about him.

He wore no clown makeup, the usual black feather jacket replaced by the contrasting white mantle of Justice. A face so similar to Doflamingo's own, sinking in the same places, aged about the same, though any receding hairline was strategically hidden by overgrown bangs. The eyes weren't mismatched nor hidden by pink shades like his own; they were both of a tender brown, so like those of their Mother, and the pity that they showed, lips bitten, the expression of someone who wanted to say something, anything, but didn't have the *heart* to.

Look where you ended up, you fool. How far you've fallen.

Rosinante slowly reached for his back pocket and caught a cigarette between his teeth, then carefully placed a second cigarette between Doflamingo's lips and offered to light it. "It's... been a while, dear brother," Rosinante said at last, tears pooling over his lashes as he held them back. The damn heart had always been his crippling weakness.

Doffy is a taker, Rosi... You're a giver. It all works out in the end , Mother had said once, while patting the head of a crying Rosinante, whose toy had been yet again taken by his big brother.

As they smoked in silence, the tar curling inside Doflamingo's lungs, no strength to push the smoke up to the neverending ceiling of the prison cell, he wondered when the roles had been reversed because the Rosinante before him—ghost or not, dead, no, he's *dead* , he's fucking **dead!** —took everything that was left of his sanity.

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